



Symington,  
Stuart

CIA S.O.S.  
Soc. 4.0.5

## Editorials

# Timely Look at Mystery of Laos

THE ALARMING POSSIBILITY that the United States is following a path in Laos identical with that which led it into its blood-soaked and hideously costly involvement in Vietnam is now under investigation by a foreign relations subcommittee of the U.S. Senate.

✓ Senator Stuart Symington, chairman of the subcommittee, which has made several trips to Laos, said flatly that American troops are engaged in the Laotian fighting; that denial of the fact is "a travesty," and that secrecy is no longer to be tolerated.

✓ Among witnesses called before the hearing are American military men stationed in Laos and the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Richard Helms. The committee wants to know exactly what role they are playing.

COMMUNIST OFFICIALS in Laos have newly complained to nations that are parties to the Geneva Conference on Laos that the United States has 14,000 troops in the country, including thousands of Green Berets and 2000 "advisory and military instructors," and that 750 American planes mostly based in Thailand, are operating against Laotian Communist forces.

Senator Symington correctly asserts that the American people need and deserve information on the Nation's Laotian commitments; and that secrecy can only compound whatever wrongful action may have been taken by American forces. His committee's inquiry — the results of which will be made public at the end of the closed-door hearings — might well head off another undeclared war; and it inevitably calls up the vain thought that such a hearing a few years back might have produced less tragic history in Vietnam.